

Universal Accessibility in Tourism Policies: an Approach from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)



Henryk F. Handszuh
Chief, Improving Competitiveness:
Quality, Investment, Trade, Health, Safety & Security
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

UNWTO Business Card

- **A UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCY**
- **PUBLIC FORUM OF TOURISM POLICY DEBATE AND LEARNING**
- **CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TOURISM**
- **ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

UNWTO Business Card

150 member States and 7 Territories

(represented by Governments/National Tourism Administrations)

300 public and private sector Affiliate Members

Headquartered in Madrid, “capital of world tourism”

What do we mean by tourism and tourism policies (1)

Tourism is travel experience: activities outside usual place of residence, supply of products and services to visitors, and satisfaction of their demand

Tourism is not only holidays, and not only the products sponsored by Ministry of Tourism

What do we mean by tourism and tourism policies (2)

- **Tourism is a cross-cutting activity in society, it is both result and vehicle of virtuous globalization**
- **Tourism policies do not exist without political will and measures: regulatory, economic and operational**
- **Tourism's major challenge is sustainability**
- **Europe's role in setting world tourism standards is fundamental: 57% of international tourist arrivals are attributable to Europeans, within and outside Europe (eg. 35% Africa, 27% Middle East)**

Tourism needs and seeks world standards in search of sustainability

Three dimensions:

- **Technical specifications**
- **Ethical dimension**
- **Quality result**

Quality is commercial response to claims of ethics and sustainability

UNWTO instrument “Accessible tourism for all”

Inspiration and development

Manila Declaration on World Tourism (1980), United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992)

- First partners (1991): SATH (New York) and Seville City Council
- Update (2005): UNWTO Quality Support and Trade Committee/ONCE Foundation (Spain)

Content of UNWTO instrument

Defining “handicapped people” as:

All persons who, owing to the environment being encountered, suffer a limitation in their relational ability and have special needs during travel, in accommodation, and other tourism services, particularly individuals with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities or other medical conditions requiring special care, such as elderly persons and others in need of temporary assistance.

Updated content of UNWTO instrument

Modifying terminology

Indications of technical specifications in the critical parts of tourism supply to ensure “deliverables”:

- Awareness raising and communication (information, publicity)
- Staff
- Common requirements/public areas
- Specific tourism facilities

Definition of handicaps and disabilities: consequences (1)

Wide spectrum:

unperceived, hidden, explicit, temporary and permanent (?) disabilities

People with disabilities more vulnerable and less secure when travelling

Definition of handicaps and disabilities: consequences (2)



Objective:

Demanding and creating enabling environments for all

How to ensure compliance with UNWTO recommendations “Accessible Tourism for All”(1)

Promotion of accessibility standards expressed by specific technical specifications:

● National standards

(voluntary and mandatory). UNWTO General Programme of Work 2006-2007: “Performance indicator: “Implementation of standards by a representative number of countries”

eg. Accessibility already features in framework tourism laws in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru

How to ensure compliance with UNWTO recommendations “Accessible Tourism for All”(2)

- **International guidance:** international voluntary standards to be developed by ISO (ISO/TC228): horizontal and tourism facility-specific standards
e.g 35% indications of surveyed UNWTO Members
Example of a model national standard: DALCO (Spain) – “Deambulaci3n, Aprehensi3n, Localizaci3n, Comunicaci3n”
- **International support:** United Nations project: Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities

How to ensure compliance with UNWTO recommendations “Accessible Tourism for All”(3)

The ethical dimension (1)

**Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO
1999; United Nations, 2001): Article 2:**

*“promote the individual rights of the most vulnerable
groups” including “the handicapped”*

**We should not forget the tourism sector’s and individual
travellers’ primary responsibility not to contribute to
disabilities!**

How to ensure compliance with UNWTO recommendations “Accessible Tourism for All”(4)

The ethical dimension (2)

World Committee on Tourism Ethics

Promotion

Commitments

Interpretation

Disputes and conciliation

} *Tourism policies and measures*

How to ensure compliance with UNWTO recommendations “Accessible Tourism for All”(5)

The quality dimension (1)

Accessibility as an underlying factor in the fundamental definition of quality in tourism (alongside safety & security, hygiene, authenticity, harmonization)

Applies basically to individual tourism service suppliers

How to ensure compliance with UNWTO recommendations “Accessible Tourism for All”(6)

The quality dimension (2)

Extension to tourism destinations quality as accessible destinations (UNWTO project 2006-2007):

- Benchmarking against objective tourism destination quality criteria
- Positive identification
- Promotion by registration

Possible link and interface with ENAT on European level



*ENAT Inaugural General Meeting and Conference
Brussels, 11 May 2005*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Henryk F. Handszuh

hhandszuh@unwto.org

quality@unwto.org

www@unwto.org

